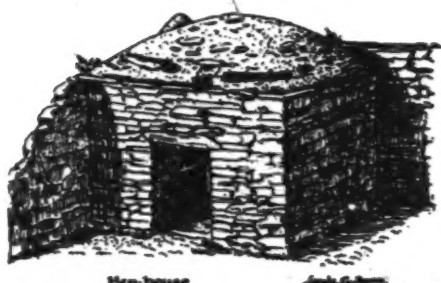
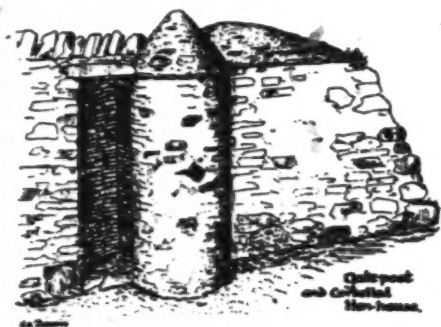


343
235

Hen-house.

J. J. G. G. G.



de B. B. B.

Corbelled
and Corbelled
Hen-house.

Fig. 38. Two views of hen-house.

515
343

Some of the holy wells visited throughout Ireland for their reputed curative powers are protected by corbelled coverings of some antiquity : one may cite the wells at Struell near Downpatrick and Ronogue's Well near Cork. Domestic wells also frequently show some degree of corbelling, but free standing well-covers like that shown in Fig. 41 are rare. To the same class of construction belong most of the surviving sweat-houses which were resorted to by rheumatic cases, profuse sweating being induced by heating the interior with turf fires beforehand. In certain counties, for example Cavan, these structures are quite common and were used into living memory. In Rathlin Island I was told that girls would go to

[757]

845 In cases of difficult labour a ploughman may be called in to lift and shake the woman gently, which it is thought will produce the desired effect. The reason given is that as he shakes and scatters the seed on the earth, so also he ought to produce a good effect here.

[752] A nail which has got into the foot is always thrown into the fire.

● 757 *Leechcraft*.—Though regular medical assistance is usually sought for serious complaints, yet, the more common ailments are often treated by the people themselves, several of the older men and women
278 enjoying some local celebrity for this.

The following list of substances used medicinally was collected; it is believed to be but a small fraction of the local pharmacopœia.

(A.) Animal substances.—Saliva is used for many purposes; thus button scurvy is treated by spitting on the floor and rubbing on the mixed saliva and dust with the right thumb.

Seal oil is rubbed in for sprains and rheumatism, for which it has a great reputation locally; it is sold in Belmullet at a pretty high price.

The tongue of a fox is used as a poultice to extract thorns, &c.

(B.) Herbs.—Mr. Nolan kindly provided the following list of plants in use in the district, most of which he has seen used. The qualities of many of these were also described to me by several of the country people.

Dandelion (*Leontodon taraxacum*), used for "liver troubles."

Comfrey (*Symphytum officinale*), used as a styptic.

Samphire (*Crithmum maritimum*), used, boiled in milk, for heart-burn.

Self-heal (locally called Heartsease) (*Brunella vulgaris*), used for palpitations.

Mountain sage (*Teucrium scorodonia*), used "for the heart" and in cough mixtures.

Ground-wood, or Bog-bark (not identified), used for gravel (boiled in milk).

Bugloss (*Echium* or *Lycopsis*), used, in poultices with oat-meal, for abscesses, &c.

Ground-ivy (*Nepeta glechoma*), used, as a "tea," for "heart beat," or mixed with other herbs for a cough.

Nettles (*Urtica dioica*), used, with ginger, for "wind on the stomach."

Ivy (*Hedera helix*), leaves used as a cap for a "scabby head."

Burdock root (*Arcetium lappa*),

Furze tops (*Ulex*),

Broom (*Cytisus scoparius*),

Carageen moss (*Spharococcus europæus*),

} usually combined and
boiled with sugar-stick
to form a cough-syrup.

BROWNE—*Ethnography of the Mullet, Inishkea, & Portacloy.* 637

- Horehound (*Marrubium vulgare*), used as an expectorant. 757 ●
 Marsh-mallow (*Althaea officinalis*), used as poultice for "sore breast." 218
 Mullein (*Verbascum thapsus*), used as an infusion for coughs.
 Parsely (*Petroselinum sativum*), boiled in milk for "gravel."
 Belladonna (*Atropa belladonna*), used for palpitation or "heart beat."

It will be seen from this list that several of the remedies used are official; and others, though not officially recognised, possess medicinal properties.

3. *Legends and Traditions.*—There are many of these current in the district, but only a small number could be collected. Among all these, few bearing on the early history of this region seem to have come down to the present time, except the tradition of a great battle fought at Cross, in the Mullet, between the people of the country, and an invading army under a king of Munster who was slain in the fight, and over whose remains a tumulus was erected. 173

There is, so far as could be ascertained, no tradition as to the origin of the earlier inhabitants, either of the mainland, or of the islands; but the families whose ancestors came from Ulster two centuries ago are well known, and sometimes are called by the name [551] Ultagh, instead of their own surnames.

It would be expected that there would be some tales connected with the duns, of which there are several, but very few seem to be known, even the oldest inhabitants not seeming to have heard any history of them. The story of Dun Donald, related by Knight,¹ the vague tradition that Dunamoa was built by the Burkes, and besieged by the "Danes"; and another concerning Dun Fiachrach, which is believed to have been a favourite resting place for the children of Lir, and the fishermen of the neighbourhood say that the founder of the fort used to ride a "water-horse," on which he could leap across the deep caves on to the cliffs on each side of the dun. Many of the people ascribe these forts to "the Danes."

The favourite tales and poems are either ancient myth, or of a semi-religious character; legends of the saints forming a large portion of the old chroniclers' stock.

Mr Knight says²—"It is not from these cairns (Seefins) alone we claim Fingal and Ossian as peculiarly ours; we have heard them in real song, and many a winter's evening have I heard the old chronicler lying on his back quietly, in the bed beyond the fire, repeat the

¹ P. Knight, *Erria*, &c., p. 166.

² *Ibid.*, p. 110.

KILNS AND CLOCHAUNS

343 XVI), had their great days in the eighteenth and nineteenth
centuries, but small-scale wrack-burning is far older than this.
381 In the later eighteenth century, when framed windows and
brick chimneys became fashionable in the more prosperous
[339] lowland farms, the bricks were locally burnt in circular kilns
plastered with clay.

343 Another class of outbuilding, allied to the clochaun in con-
struction, is the stone sweat-house, the Irish version of the
757 Turkish bath, which the Germans, indeed, call the Irish bath.
There is a theory that the idea reached Ireland with Christian
missionaries who were accustomed to Roman practices, but
heat-treatment as a cure is so widespread throughout the world
(cf. the sweat-houses of Finland and pre-Columbian California)
that one thinks of remoter origins. What is certain is that they
were visited for cures within living memory in several parts of
Ireland. In west Cavan twenty-five sweat-houses have been
listed in one district, and many more are known to have been
destroyed. A French traveller of the late eighteenth century
observed that 'wherever there are four or five cabins near each
other there is sure to be a sweating-house'.¹ And old people in
Cavan confirm that every four or five families once shared a
sweat-house, in which sweating cures were taken in summer and
autumn (Fig. 37, 6).

The sweat-house is a dry-stone corbelled structure, measuring
internally from four to seven feet in diameter and rather less
in height. A low lintelled doorway is the only means of access
though some specimens have a roughly constructed chimney
flue to allow the smoke to escape. This was closed with sods
during the treatment, as was the door. The fire of turf—straw
and bracken seem also to have been used—had been kept
burning inside for a day or two previously. The floor, normally
an earthen floor though some examples were cobbled or paved,
was then swept clean and strewn with green rushes. On these,
or on grass sods or low stools which they took in with them,
from two to as many as six or seven persons would sit, naked and
sweating profusely. After half an hour or so they would emerge
and cool themselves either in a near-by stream or with a bucket

¹De Latocnaye, *A Frenchman's Walk through Ireland* (1796-97). Ed. J. Stevenson (1917), 193.

KILNS AND CLOCHAUNS

of water. I was told on Rathlin Island that eligible girls would take a sweating bath to clear their complexions before the annual visit to the Lammas Fair at Ballycastle on the mainland. They were in demand also during kelp-burning operations—a notoriously filthy occupation. Not all sweat-houses were built of stone. Wood-Martin quotes accounts of some which were dug into an earthen bank and 'finished with sods', while others were excavated in turf banks.¹ He also records that water was sometimes poured on stones inside the sweat-house, 'thus converting it into a vapour—as well as a sweat-bath'.²

More intimately linked with the house is the turf-shelter, the Irish equivalent of the English coal-shed. In the drier eastern part of the country a built shelter is not necessary, and the peats, skilfully built into a huge turf-stack protected from the driving rains by a wall or gable, perhaps improve by exposure to the winds, but in the wetter west unless the turf is under cover it must be dried in small quantities in the loft or by the fire before burning. In parts of Kerry the turf is stored in large clochauns: elsewhere narrow oblong or oval stone enclosures are erected, their walls loosely built to allow the wind to blow through. The peat-store or cleit of St. Kilda was similar—an oblong corbelled stone building with open joints.

The well is another essential item of equipment of farm or clachan, and it is often provided with a corbelled stone cover. Since springs are abundant, except in bare limestone country, the wells are not deep and few are fitted with windlasses. In their absence quite elaborate ramps with stone steps are sometimes needed to obtain access to the water, and the whole structure being roofed, some examples (for instance in the south-east of Co. Down) are considerable architectural feats (Fig. 40). In the limestone districts the woman of the house may have to walk as much as half a mile to carry drinking water from a dip-well. It is now carried in buckets but was formerly transported in stave-built piggins balanced on the head. The peasant makes a virtue of necessity by asserting that almost every spring well yields 'the finest water in all Ireland, and never runs dry'. Wells are regarded as chancy things, not to be

¹Wood-Martin, *Elder Faiths*, II (1902), 166.

²*Ibid.*, 165.

BOATS AND FISHING

- 227 confined to Co. Westmeath) is that the eel was undamaged and its skin could therefore be utilized. Apart from their use as
 [237] thongs and flail-hangings eel-skins were worn as charms against
 [751] rheumatic pains. Eel fat, too, is esteemed as a cure for rheuma-
 [757] tism. The third type of eel-spear is quite different in form and methods of use. It is confined to Wexford Harbour and would appear to be a relic of Scandinavian influence in that half-foreign south-eastern corner of Ireland comprising the baronies of Bargy and Forth. It consists of two splayed prongs between which is ingeniously mounted a single barbed prong on to which
 227 the eel is guided by the outer members (Fig. 79). When the
 226 tide covers the mudflats the fisherman lies in a punt with his head over the prow, and with a spear in each hand propels the boat until he spies an eel in the mud, when his punting pole becomes a weapon. At low tide the eel fishers wear yard-long
 [481] 'scooches' or mud-shoes, wooden boards turned up at the front like miniature skis. We note in passing that boards were formerly worn by both men and horses in working on soft bogs in Co. Mayo.¹

The salmon spear or leister, being illegal, is normally a light three-pronged instrument, but large specimens weighing up to eight pounds and made after the fashion of the Westmeath eel-spears are found on the River Suir (Fig. 80). The fish were attracted at night by 'burning the river' with resinous splits of bog-fir or lumps of peat soaked in oil.

- Riverine weirs of many kinds have been the privilege of religious houses and landed properties through the ages, and many examples specially designed for the capture of migratory fish, salmon and eels are maintained. There are traditions of temporary weirs of heather stems weighted down with stones, into which trout were driven to be extracted when the bundles of heather were pitched on to the bank. Gerard Boate describes the weirs in his day as consisting of 'big stones set close together from the one side of the river to the other, leaving only one hole . . . before which hole a basket being laid, they take
 227 therein a great quantity of fish'.² 'Fish baskets' and 'weels' are referred to in many ancient fishing grants, but I have not

¹J. McParlan, *Mayo*, 94.

²Gerard Boate, *Ireland's Natural History*, 70.

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date) 1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

Collectanea.

211

Breeda, Miltown, Kilgorey, Fortanne, Broadford, Trough, Ralahine, Cragg, Lahardan, and Cappavilla, with perhaps, (if not of St. Molocus, c. 550), Moylough, Scatterry, and Carrigaholt; *Molua* (c. 620), Killaloe; *Onchu*, Killonaghan; *Sanctan*, Dromline; *Screbann*, Clondegad and Kilmaley; *Senan* (d. 552), Iniscatha, Moylough, Iniscaeragh (Mutton Island), Kilclogher, Carrow (Kilmaduan), Erribul (Kilfiddan), Kilshanny, Killaneena, Cooraclare, Kilcredaun, and Drim (Quin); *Tola* (c. 635), Dysert O'Dea and Kiltola; and *Voydan* or *Braighdean* (unknown), Kilvoydan, Corofin, and Kilraughtis.

Healing Powers.—The *Ordnance Survey Letters*¹² mention the following:—Gleninagh well, which has a fifteenth-century well-house or "turry," cured sore eyes; Tober Cholmain, above Oughtmama churches, sufferers from "the pearl," the films falling off the eyes at the third washing; St. Maccreehy's well, near Liscannor, eye troubles, which were also cured by St. Inghean Baoith's well near Kilshanny (even then nearly deserted), Tobermoghna near Clooney (Corcomroe), St. Senan's well on the cliffs south-west from Kilkee, Kilcrony well near Carrigaholt, Tobercuan in Kiltrellig near Loop Head, Tobershenan in Moyfadda, the Virgin's well at Templemaley, and Tober Isa at Corlack Glebe (Bunratty). Tobernatasha, ("well of the relic" or, as some say, "spectre"), in Kilmaley was shaped like a coffin, and delicate children used to be laid on their backs in it.¹³ The black mud which gave its name to Toberduff cured sore eyes and swelled limbs. So did Senan's well at Kilkee; horrible to tell, the devotees,—down to 1875, at least, when a washing-tank was made outside the well-house,—used to wash in this, the only supply of drinking-water for the then fashionable watering-place. Toberlachtin at Kilnemona cured several diseases, its "day" being March 19th. Eyes were also healed by the well south from Newmarket-on-Fergus, and by the wetted moss of St. Mochulla's well near Tulla (the moss being put back to complete the cure). The latter well is said to have avenged itself, about 1780, on its landlord, who had dug away part of its enclosure, by rendering

¹² Library of the Royal Irish Academy, Mss. 148 23, 24, (Co. Clare), vols. I. and II.

¹³ *Ordnance Survey Letters*, (Co. Clare), vol. I., p. 183.

[P 232]

776
778
823

757
778
823

[55]

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date) 1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

Collectanea.

757 his son and daughter imbecile. The son survived till 1853, and
778 no other members of the family were affected after the well was
823 restored.¹⁴ The Newmarket well indignantly removed itself to its
present site when "a dirty woman washed her feet in it," and it
also gave her the complaint it usually cured. So, also, when the
holy well above Oughtmama¹⁵ was offended, it closed, and broke
out lower down the hillside, as the Sruhaunanaeve or "saints'
stream," and the water of Killone well refused to boil. The
Cunninghams, living near it, spoilt their cooking by using its
water, though "they knew it would not boil." John Windele tells
of other resentful wells in Cork and Kerry; for example, the well
at Labba Molagga (Cork) ran dry when a woman washed her
clothes in it, and at Maunaholtora the well near a dolmen ran dry,
and its water refused to boil.¹⁶ The Irish "Nennius" tells a story
of ducks that could not be boiled because the water would
not get hot while they were in it. In the last century a woman
who drew water from a well and saw it did not boil found a fish in
it. She took the fish back to the well, and the water then boiled
without any difficulty. The mud of the dolmen or "well" of
Tobergranua at Ballycroum cured sore or short-sighted eyes, and
that of the bullaun or basin at Kiltinanlea church near Clonlara
did the same. The well of St. Michael at Kilmihil was once
powerful. Father Anthony Bruodin, a Franciscan and author of
a history of his order¹⁷ full of curious particulars about Clare
before 1640, tells how "Lady" Mariana, wife of Thomas
MacGorman, of the author's kinsfolk, had in 1632 long suffered
from gout. The Archangel appeared to her in a dream, and bade
her go to his church and dig where she should see rushes growing
near it. Aided by her son and Dermot O'Quaely, the parish
priest of Kilmihil, she found the well and was cured. Many other
persons got similar relief, but there seems no tradition of any cures
by it preserved among the people of Kilmihil.

778 *Offerings.*—It is right, on visiting a well, to make offerings of
782

¹⁴ So Mrs. Connors at Fortanne.

¹⁵ Pronounced Ooght-máw-má. It is a weird spot with three ancient
823 churches in a grassy basin on the flank of a terraced hill of bare grey limestone.

¹⁶ Windele, *Mss. Royal Irish Academy; Borlase, Dolmens of Ireland*,
vol. iii., pp. 765-9.

¹⁷ *Propugnaculum Catholicæ Fidei*, 1665.

[P. 233]

Collectanea.

755

frogs (at Newmarket-on-Fergus) would creep down their throats. The finding of flukes and other parasites in sheep and cattle has helped the belief, and a beast's tongue, if swollen, is supposed to have been "stung by a worm." We have already noted a cure for "worm" in cattle,³⁴ and the milk of the "Seven Sisters" plant³⁵ boiled in milk cures similar cases in human beings.³⁶

825

[757] •

Frog.—Besides jumping down children's throats, the frog cures a cough if held by the legs, put for a moment into the sufferer's mouth, and returned to the water.³⁷ In a variant of the Bishop Hatto legend, at Bohatey, near Lough Derg, frogs mob and devour a boy who has tortured one of their number.³⁸ Frogs are said to have been rained on a field in eastern Burren more than once.

Insects etc.—An old woman at Maryfort in 1869 scandalized her neighbours by asserting butterflies to be dwellings of the human soul, and that her own soul would go into a "blessed (tortoise-shell) butterfly." Whence she derived this belief is unknown. I heard about the same time, and, it may be, from the same source, a horrible story of a "spider as big as a *bonnive*" (young pig) sucking the blood of children in the dark, but I forget the details. It is lucky to kill the "*daudayle*" (*dubh dael*) or "devil's coach-horse," for this hideous but harmless creature has the repute of having guided Judas to Gethsemane.³⁹ When it "cocks up its hind end," you should crush it, preferably with your bare foot, for you are then spared a day, hour, or week in Purgatory. In Clare I have only found this belief near Tulla, but it is common in other counties.

[774]

³⁴ *Ants*, p. 58.

³⁵ *Cl. ants*, p. 57.

³⁶ So the late Michael Hasleton, an astrologer and herb doctor near Limerick.

³⁷ So Mrs. O'Callaghan.

³⁸ So Capt. Hibbert of Woodpark. A similar tale is told about toads by Giraldus Cambrensis, *Itinerary in Wales*, cap. ii.

³⁹ In Ulster the "connach worm" replaces the beetle. The tale says that men were sowing a corn-field when Our Lord and the faithful disciples passed, and that He told the sowers to inform His partners that they had last seen Him when they were sowing. The corn at once sprang into ear, and the partners, on getting the answer to their enquiry, were turning back when the worm cried out that the seed had only just been sown. The Ulster tale was collected by Mr. W. F. De Vinnes Kane, D.L., of Monaghan. In Clare Island (Mayo) Mr. N. Colgan found a similar tale told of St. Patrick and his enemies.

[194]

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date) 1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

456

Collectanea.

824

753

757

824

[752]

824

777

789

Plants.—The "hungry grass" grows on mountains, and, if trodden on, causes a sickening hunger which kills if not relieved. I knew a man in County Limerick who said he "knew it to happen to another man" on the Clare hills, and the victim got food in bare time to save him.³⁰ Seven strips of a plantain leaf stop the bleeding of a bad wound. The "Seven Sisters" plant for healing purposes must be picked at a particular period of the sun and moon in August. Fern "dust" (seeds) heals cuts from rushes; the dock charms nettle stings; and the four-leaved shamrock brings luck if found accidentally. The belief that house-leek preserves a house from burning³¹ is widespread in north and east Clare. The pennywort has a sectarian bias, and only cures Protestants,³² and this is connected near Bunratty with a curious legend of Anne Boleyn. This hapless queen, after enjoying by means of the plant the greatest influence over her terrible spouse,³³ "got into trouble, but, when she was sent to jail, she couldn't get the plant, and they hanged her." The rowan, or mountain ash, is a luck-bringer and preservative from magic, and I remember small forked twigs being carried. A rowan, planted at Iniscaltra about 890 by King Cormac mac Cuileanan, bore apples.³⁴ Moss from a skull, or an ancient cross such as that at Dysert O'Dea, or a pillar, is curative; the moss at Fortanne well was used for the eyes, but had to be replaced. If you see a "button mushroom" you should pluck it, as "it will never grow any more once it is looked at."³⁵

THOS. J. WESTROPP.

(To be continued.)

[P. 252]

14: Westropp B-4, 5 (no date) 1910-12
ER6 Rural Irish ER6
County Clare

Collectanea.

wrote a satire against the rats, and tried it on an infested house at Kilkee, in the same year, but without success.

About the same time certain men in Limerick City were famous for being able to free ships in that port from rats. Their method was to fix a razor, edge upwards, on the ship, and by their charms to force the rats to cut their throats on it.²⁰

Dr. G. U. MacNamara tells me that Denis Curtis near Corofin cures liver complaints, bleeding, and cures cows that have swallowed raw potatoes. He puts his human patients on their backs on his anvil, and pretends to strike them with a sledge hammer. This is done on three occasions, on two Mondays and a Thursday. The patients then drink forge water. All the family have the gift of healing, but only one exercises it. The family legend says that St. Patrick's horse lost a shoe near Kilnaboy, and their ancestor shod it gratuitously. The saint therefore endowed the family with the power, and people even return from America to be cured by the smith.

Marriage tabu.—In eastern Clare, a newly-married woman attended Mass on the Sunday next after her marriage, and was severely criticised for doing so. Local opinion held that she and her husband ought not to attend public worship until the second Sunday after the marriage.²¹

*Púca.*²²—A recent apparition of the *púca* of Clonlara was described to me in 1911 as a dark, shadowy horse near the bridge over the Blackwater, about two miles to the south-west of the village. My nephew, Dr. Hugh Gerald Westropp, heard of similar appearances about 1888.

*Lucky and unlucky deeds.*²³—The *geasa* and *buadha*, or tabus and lucky acts, relating to the present County Clare are described in the *Leabhar na g Ceart* (Book of Rights),²⁴ in a poem by Cuan na

²⁰ *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, vol. v., ser. iii., p. 362.

²¹ I learn from a Petty Sessions case, March, 1911, at Derrygonnelly, that this custom prevails also in Fermanagh, and that friends and relatives do not visit the young couple in the interim, but entertain them on the second Sunday.

²² Addendum to vol. xxi., p. 481.

²³ Addendum to section xii., *Lucky and Unlucky Deeds*, vol. xxii., pp. 203-4.

²⁴ Edited by John O'Donovan, 1847, pp. 16-21.

40 • THE LAND AND THE SEA

duced trawlers and other types of fishing vessels and financed their purchase by islanders of the region, sent instructors to teach fishermen how to use the new boats and gear, set up curing and storage facilities in the islands, facilitated the shipping of fish to mainland markets, and attempted to regulate these markets so as to ensure maximum profits for the folk. These efforts failed for the most part in Inis Beag, and today the men fish from *carach*, much as did their grandfathers. The continuing effort of the government to improve fishing in the area is reflected in instruction in modern fishing techniques at a school in a nearby island, and the successful operation of a number of government financed trawlers and other fishing boats from there.

The islanders consider fish from the sea, which are netted, more palatable and healthier to eat than those caught with lines and trawls, fresh water fish, and fish which have been cured or frozen. Fish taken on lines, because they bleed, and those enmeshed in trawls, because they suffocate, are thought to suffer in taste and nourishment, as do those which are treated artificially for sale; and fresh water fish are believed to be unhealthy to eat because they feed on refuse thrown into lakes and rivers rather than on natural foods. Some folk exclude even mackerel from their diet, since these fish "swim on the surface and eat everything dirty afloat." We already have noted that Inis Beag elders prefer seaweed to chemical fertilizers; the preference for netted fish which feed on natural foods to fresh water fish and mackerel which are contaminated is another example of a recurrent cultural theme—the positive valuation of natural objects and the negative valuation of artificial ones which come in contact with the human body. Other manifestations of this theme are the emphasis placed on folk medicines and the distrust of medicines prescribed by nurse and doctor, the belief that certain foods will assure health and combat specific illnesses, and the fear of piped water and canned foods. I often was told that I could improve my eyesight by giving up my glasses and rubbing dew on my eyelids, or by walking along the seashore to allow the wind and spray to penetrate my eyeballs.

Over 30 varieties of fish are caught off Inis Beag, some with lines of varying length and number of hooks, others in the four types of nets, and a few with both lines and nets. Most important of the fish are: ling, cod, bream, gurnet, haddock, and autumn mackerel caught with lines; plaice, turbot, rock fish, and pollack both netted and taken on lines; and herring and spring mackerel captured in special nets. Trammel and drag nets are used in addition to herring and mackerel nets, and the most commonly used baits are gurnet, haddock, conger eel, bream, herring, and limpets. Fishing techniques vary considerably, as do the times of the year when particular kinds of fish are available, the localities that they frequent, and the baits which are most effective for each variety. Fishing crews form at different times of the year, often to fish in certain areas for specific fish. They are composed of both kin and close friends, and they tend to alter in membership from year to year as other activities intrude.

Before I leave the subject of fishing, I wish to correct three commonly held misconceptions concerning Inis Beag men: they are all skilled seamen; because they spend much of their time at sea they are of necessity able swimmers; and

RELIGION AND PERSONALITY • 111

181 and the never ending toil needed to maintain present subsistence standards; the
152 spying and malicious gossiping of their fellows and the ubiquity of jealousy and
[562] envy; the isolation of the island, particularly during winter months; numbing
boredom and the dearth of social activities; for women, the lack of freedom and
of attention and affection from their spouses, as well as the necessity of enduring
828 sexual relations; and, as stated above, hypochondria. Much has been written about
829 isolation and its depressive effects on the islanders, and the folk themselves con-
stantly complain of being shut off from the world and prey to wind, rain, fog, and
[104] raging sea. But isolation need not lead inevitably to depression, for my wife and
I conducted research in another island of Ireland—far distant from and even more
inaccessible than Inis Beag—where the inhabitants do not feel isolated and are
not depressed.

121 I have expanded the clinical usage of the term hypochondria to include
fears of the spirit as well as fears of the body, for ill health can as often be induced
by supernatural forces, and death—whether by disease, injury, or aging—is the
164 ultimate fear with its threat of eternal damnation. Colds, influenza, dyspepsia,
migraine headaches, teeth decay, the crippling effects of joint and muscle ailments,
[166] hypermetrophy, and mental illness are paramount among health concerns. "Flu"
epidemics are frequent in the island and are a chief cause of death among people
[189] who have become weakened by old age. As the folk advance in years, they come to
spend more time in bed and by the turf fire and venture out less during the winter
[151] and when it rains. Drafts are avoided whenever possible, and clothes dampened by
seas which wash the canoes or by rain are changed for dry ones at the first oppor-
tunity. Colds, flu, indigestion, and headaches more than any other afflictions send
[157] the islanders to the nurse for drugs and to their own folk remedies for relief.
[155] Dyspepsia is known as "wind" and is thought to result from diet, but the nurses
say that most cases of indigestion are the result of tension—"nervous stomach."
Nine cases of migraine were reported in Inis Beag during 1959, but many other
islanders, most of whom are women, suffer from "nervous headache" which can
[123] approach migraine in intensity of pain. Neither my wife nor I were ill during the
[157] winter of 1959 and 1960, even though we were abroad in all sorts of inclement
weather against the advice of our neighbors; when we began picking wild garlic
to season our food, it was reasoned that the condiment afforded us protection
against the flu, which reached almost epidemic proportions that year, and as a
result this folk medicine was used more widely and consistently than usual.

[114] Nativists and primitivists praise the health and hardness of the folk and
boast of the absence of rheumatism and allied infirmities among them and the
sharpness of their sight. But, just as most adults past 30 years of age suffer from
decay and loss of teeth, they also suffer from muscle and joint ailments, caused by
the "damp and cold," and from far-sightedness. It is not known how many folk
wear glasses in the privacy of their homes, but only two persons, both men, wear
them publicly—and self-consciously when they do. Most glasses are not prescrip-
tion made but are purchased in mainland shops after many pairs displayed on the
counters have been tested, and often a single pair will serve the needs of all the
[829] elders of a household. The islanders among themselves constantly complain of these
[668] and other ailments, although some will praise the health and hardness of the local